




20 October 2006

USFK Annual Influenza Prevention Program

1. Influenza or “the Flu” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by Influenza viruses. Unlike the common cold and some other respiratory infections, seasonal Influenza can cause severe illness -- to include death.
2. More than 200,000 people are hospitalized every year in the United States from flu complications, and about 36,000 of these individuals die. Influenza symptoms include fever, muscle aches, headaches, malaise (general feeling of weakness and feeling “poorly”), sore throat, a dry cough, and a runny nose.
3. The Annual Influenza vaccination is a key element in our force health protection program, and it is the primary method for preventing seasonal Influenza and its complications. As we approach this year’s flu season, it is important that every qualified Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, DoD Civilian, and DoDDS school-age child in the Republic of Korea receive their annual Influenza vaccination by 31 December 2006.
4. Individuals aged 65 years and older, people of any age with chronic medical conditions or seriously compromised immune systems, children younger than 2 years old, and pregnant women, are more likely than others to develop severe complications from Influenza – and it is imperative they receive their immunization early in the Influenza vaccine season. Two vaccine types are being used in the USFK to protect against Influenza: an injectable vaccine (Fluzone), and a vaccine administered as a nasal spray (FluMist).
5. The Influenza vaccine is highly effective in preventing seasonal Influenza in all recipients of the vaccine, and its success is multiplied when a significant proportion of the population is vaccinated. As a result, all USFK personnel, retirees, and family members need to receive their annual Flu immunization prior to 31 December 2006. You will be notified by your chain of command and through command information channels when it is your turn to receive the Influenza immunization.
6. I encourage you to employ these additional preventive medicine measures in order to decrease the transmission of the Flu virus within USFK: frequently wash your hands (or hand sanitize with a alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel) to help protect yourself from germs and to reduce the incidence of spreading germs elsewhere; avoid close contact with anyone who is sick; cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing; and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to limit your exposure to germs (germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth).

7. The goal of the USFK Annual Influenza Prevention Program is to protect our USFK team from Influenza and its severe complications. We can achieve this goal if every qualified member receives the Influenza vaccination and follows good preventive medicine measures. I appreciate your efforts to keep the USFK team healthy and mission-ready.



B. B. BELL
General, US Army
Commander

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